prajña-vara-pāramitāya caryā

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ISBN: 9798304583350

Published by Phillip De-Vere
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This excerpt comprises chapters 1-2 of the **Prajñāpāramitā-Ratnaguṇasaṃcayagāthā** which is the first section of the **Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā**

In the Tibetan translation by Jinamitra, the **Prajñāpāramitā-Ratnaguṇasaṃcayagāthā** appears as the 84th chapter of the **Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā**

In the Chinese translation by Fa Xian, the **Prajñāpāramitā-Ratnaguṇasaṃcayagāthā** appears as a verse summary of the **Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā**

THE PRACTICE OF WISDOM
THE HIGHEST PERFECTION

PRAJNA-VARA-PARAMITAYA CARYA

Shakyamuni Buddha

translated by Phillip Medhurst

being chapters 1-2 of

Prajñapāramitā-Ratnagunasamcayagāthā

"Verses on the Perfection of Wisdom which is the Storehouse of Precious Virtues"

which is a section of

Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra

"The Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in 8000 Lines"

STANZA 1

para-prema-gaurava-prasāda upasthapitvā

prajahitva āvaraṇa-kleśa malātikrāntāḥ

śṛṇutā jagārtham abhiprasthita-suravratānāṃ

prajñāya pāramita yatra caranti śūrāḥ

Summon your utmost love, respect and devotion!

Remove obstructing defilements, eradicate stains!

Listen to the perfect wisdom of the gentle buddhas,

taught for the world's own good, for enactment by heroes!

STANZA 2

yāvanti nadya pravahant' iha Jambudvīpe

phala-puṣpa-auṣadhādhi-vanaspati rohayanti

bhūjatagajendra-nāga-pati niśray Anovatapte

tasyānubhāva-śriyasā bhujagādhipasya

“The rivers here in all Jambudvipa,

which cause the flowers, the fruits, the herbs and trees to grow,

all have their source in the might of the king of nagas, from the dragon residing in Lake Anovatapta

through the great power of his grace.

STANZA 3

yāvanti dharma Jina-śrāvaka deśayanti

bhāṣanti yukti-sahitāṃś ca udīrayanti

paramārtha-saukhya-kriya tat-phala-prāptitā ca

sarvo ayaṃ puruṣa-kāru Tathāgatasya

Just so, whatever doctrines the Victor's disciples lay down,

whatever they teach, whatever adroitly expound concerning the work of the holy

which leads to the consummation of bliss and its fruition —

this is the Tathagata's endeavour.

STANZA 4

kiṃ kāraṇaṃ ya Jina bhāṣati dharma-netrīṃ

tatrābhiśikṣita nara-rṣabha-śiṣya-bhūtāḥ

sākṣāt-karitva yatha-śikṣita deśayanti

buddhānubhāva na punaātma-balānubhāvā

For whatever the Victor has taught — the guide to the dharma —

his disciples, if genuine, have all thoroughly practised it.

Having realised it, they teach as they trained.

Their teaching derives from the puissance of the buddhas, and not their own power.

STANZA 5

yasmin na prajña-vara-pāramitopalabdhiḥ

na ca bodhisattva-upalabdhi na citta bodheḥ

evaṃ śruṇitva na ca muhyati nā sti trāso

so bodhisattva carate Sugatāna prajñām

We can in fact apprehend no absolute transcendental wisdom,

no bhodisattva-hood, no mind of enlightenment.

When told of this, if not perplexed and in no wise fearful,

the bodhisattva is on-track to the Well-Gone's wisdom.

STANZA 6

na ca rupa-vedana na saṃjña na cetanā ca

vijñāna-sthānu aṇu-mātra' a-labhonti tasya

so sarva-dharma a-sthito a-niketa-cārī

a-parīrigṛhīta labhate sugatāna bodhim

Not in form, nor feeling, in intention nor perception,

no consciousness offers a place of repose.

Held not by universal phenomena, homeless he wanders,

nor at them does he grasp — he is bound to wake up to the well-gone-ones' enlightenment.

STANZA 7

atha Sreṇikasya abhutī parivrājakasya

jñānopalambhuna hi skandha-vibhāvanā ca

yo bodhisattva parijānati eva dharmāṃ

na ca Nirvṛtiṃ spṛśati so viharāti prajñām

The mendicant Srenika in his truth-realisation

discerned nothing concrete, as the aggregates crumbled.

Just so the bodhisattva, rightly intuiting the nature of phenomena,

does not retire into Nirvana. Then in wisdom he abides.

STANZA 8

vyuparīkṣate punar ayaṃ katar’ eṣu prajñā

kasmāt kuto va imi śūnyaka sarva-dharmāḥ

vyuparīkṣamāṇu na ca līyati nāsti trāso

āsannu so bhavati bodhayi bodhisattvo

He questions what, of whom and from where this wisdom is,

only to find all phenomena are empty.

Through that direct examination,
unconfused and uncowed,

not far from enlightenment is that bodhisattva then.

STANZA 9

saci rupa saṃjña api vedana cetanā ca

vijñāna-skandha caratī a-prajānamāno

imi skandha śūnya parikalpayi bodhisattvo

caratī nimitta an-upāda-pade a-sakto

To make practice in the aggregates, in form, in feeling, in perception, in intention

and consciousness, and not to sagely cognize

that these complexes are empty, for the bodhisattva is

to engage with causal signs — the path of non-production overlooked.

STANZA 10

na ca rupa-vedana na saṃjña na cetanāyā

vijñāni yo na caratī a-niketa-cārī

caratīti so na upagacchati prajña-dhārī

an-upāda-dhī spṛśati śānti-samādhi śreṣṭhām

But when he does not make practice in form, in feeling, or perception, in intention

or consciousness, but wanders homeless,

steadily unaware of making practice in wisdom,

apprehending non-production — then the peace of contemplation is his.

STANZA 11

evātma-śānti viharant' iha bodhisattvo

so vyākṛto puramakehi tathāgatehi

na ca manyate ahu samādhitu vyutthito

kasmārtha dharma-prakṛtiṃ parijānayitvā

Through that, the bodhisattva now abides at peace in himself,

his future marked out by thus-gone-ones gone before.

Whether absorbed in meditative equipoise or not,
he does not mind,

for of phenomena as they are he comprehends the
basic ground.

STANZA 12

evaṃ carantu caratī sugatāna prajñāṃ

no cāpi so labhati yatra carāti dharmam

caraṇaṃ ca so a-caraṇaṃ ca prajānayitvā

eṣā sa prajña-vara-pāramitāya caryā

Making practice like that he engages in the
well-gone-ones' wisdom,

and yet he apprehends no phenomena in which he
makes practice.

This making of practice he wisely knows to be a non-engagement.

This is the practice of wisdom, the highest perfection.

STANZA 13

yo 'sau na vidyati sa eṣa a-vidyamāno

tāṃ bālu kalpayi a-vidya karoti vidyām

vidyā-avidya ubhi eti a-santa dharmā

niryāti yo iti prajānati bodhisattvo

That which does not exist, fools imagine non-existent;

they fashion non-existence as well as existence.

Existence, non-existence, are both not dharmic facts.

A bodhisattva wisely knows this as he proceeds.

STANZA 14

māyopamāṃ ya iha jānati pañca skandhāṃ

na ca māya anya na ca skandha karoti anyān

ni nānātva-saṃjña-vigato upaśānta-cārī

eṣā sa prajñavarapāramitāya caryā

If he knows the five aggregates as like an illusion,

yet does not make illusion one thing, and the aggregates another;

if, freed from the notion of various things, he enters into peace —

this is the practice of wisdom, the highest perfection.

STANZA 15

kalyāṇa-mitra-sahitasya vipaśyakasya

trāso na bheṣyati śruṇitva Jināna Mātrām

yo pāpa-mitra-sahito ca para-praṇeyo

so āma-bhājana yathodaka-spṛṣṭa bhinno

Those with good teachers as well as profound insight,

are without fear while listening to the deep tenets of the Mother of Victors.

But those with bad teachers, who can be misled by others,

are wrecked thereby, like an unfired pot ruined by moisture.

STANZA 16

kiṃ kāraṇaṃ ayu pravucyati bodhisattvo

sarvatra saṅga-kriya icchati saṅga-chedī

bodhiṃ spṛśiṣyati jināna a-saṅga-bhūtāṃ

tasmāddhi nāma labhate ayu bodhisattvo

Wherefore do we speak of ‘beings who strive for awakening’?

Wanting to break through attachment and to cut attachment,

true non-attachment, or the awakening of the victors, is their future lot.

Therefore they get the name ‘bhodisattva’.

STANZA 17

maha-sattva so 'tha kenocyati kāraṇena

mahatāya atra ayu bheṣyati sattva-rāśeḥ

dṛṣṭī-gatāṃ mahati chindati sattva-dhātoḥ

maha-sattva tena hi pravucyati kāraṇena

Wherefore do we speak of ‘beings who are great’?

They rise to the highest place above a great mass of beings;

and of a great mass of beings they lop off erroneous views.

Therefore they get the name ‘mahasattva’.

STANZA 18

maha-nāyako mahata-buddhi mahānubhāvo

maha-yāna uttama jināna samādhirūḍho

mahatā-sanaddhu namuciṃ śaṭha dharṣayiṣye

maha-sattva tena hi pravucyati kāraṇena

Great as givers, great as thinkers, great as powers,

they mount the great chariot of supreme victors.

With great armour buckled on, they quash the trickery of Namuci.

Therefore they get the name ‘mahasattva’.

STANZA 19

māyā-karo yatha catuṣ-pathi nirmiṇitvā

mahato janasya bahu chindati śīrṣakoṭī

yatha te ca māya tatha jānati sarva-sattvāṃ

nirmāṇu sarva jagato na ca tasya trāso

Well-briefed, they perceive, conjured up in a show-space,

a throng undergoing decapitation,

each one of those beings a sorcerer’s illusion;

They know it’s a dumb-show, and have no fear.

STANZA 20

rupaṃ ca saṃjña api vedana cetanā ca

vijñāna-bandhu na ca mukta a-saṅga-bhūto

evaṃ ca bodhi kramate na ca līna-citto

saṃnāha eṣa vara pudgala-uttamānām

Form, perception, feeling, intention

and consciousness never bound, are never freed.

Uncowed in their thought they proceed to enlightenment,

the best carapace for those raised on high.

STANZA 21

kiṃ kāraṇaṃ ayu pravucyati bodhi-yāno

yatrāruhitva sa Nirvāpayi sarva-sattvān

ākāśa-tulya ayu yāna mahā-vimāno

sukha-saukhya-kṣemam abhiprāpaṇu
yāna-śreṣṭho

What then again is the ‘bodhiyana’?

Mounted upon it one guides to Nirvana all beings.

Great is that vehicle, immense, as vast as the vastness of space.

Its passengers are conveyed to security, bliss and ease.

STANZA 22

na ca labhyate ya vrajate diśa āruhitvā

Nirvāṇa oka gamanaṃ gati nopalabdhiḥ

yatha agni nirvṛtu na tasya gati-pracāro

so tena nirvṛti pravucyati kāraṇena

Thus rising above the mundane, he escapes our grasp;

he is said to go to Nirvana, but no one can say exactly where he arrived;

— a fire goes out, but to where, we ask, has it gone? —

in the same way, how can we find the one who has attained blessèd cessation?

STANZA 23

pūrvāntato na upalabhyati bodhisattvo

aparāntato 'pi pratiupanna triy-adhva-śuddho

yo śuddha so an-abhisaṃskṛtu niṣprapañco

eṣā sa prajñavarapāramitāya caryā

The bodhisattva’s past, present and future elude us;

time’s three aspects nowhere impinge.

Quite pure he is, uncompounded, beyond differentiation.

This is the practice of wisdom, the highest perfection.

STANZA 24

yasmiṃś ca kāli samaye vidu bodhisattvo

evaṃ carantu an-upādu vicintayitvā

mahatīṃ janeti karuṇāṃ na ca sattva-saṃjñā

eṣā sa prajñavarapāramitāya caryā

In that time, insightful, the bodhisattvas,

thus making practice, reflect on non-production,

while nonetheless engendering the great compassion, with beings uncognized.

This is the practice of wisdom, the highest perfection.

STANZA 25

saci sattva-saṃjña dukha-saṃjña upādayātī

hariṣyāmi duḥkha jagatīṃ kariṣyāmi artham

so ātma-sattva-parikalpaku bodhisattvo

na ca eṣa prajña-vara-pāramitāya caryā

But when the notion of suffering and of beings leads him to think:

‘I shall abolish suffering, bring salvation to the world’,

then the bodhisattva constructs a self and beings.

This not the practice of wisdom, the highest perfection.

STANZA 26

yatha ātmanaṃ tatha prajānati sarva-sattvāṃ

yatha sarva-sattva tatha prajānati sarva-dharmān

an-upād'-upādu ubhaye a-vikalpamāno

eṣā sa prajña-vara-pāramitāya caryā

He wisely realises, like himself, all beings are unproduced;

he wisely realises, like all beings, all phenomena are unproduced:

both origination and non-origination should not be conceived.

This is the practice of wisdom, the highest perfection.

STANZA 27

yāvanti loki parikīrtita dharma-nāma

sarveṣ' upāda-samatikramu nirgamitvā

a-mṛtaṃ ti jñānu paramaṃ na tu yo pareṇa

ekārtha prajña ayu pāramiteti nāmā

All the labels of worldly phenomena must be scrapped,

everything produced and made must be gone beyond.

The immortal, superlative, matchless knowledge is then gained.

That's the sense in which we call wisdom the highest perfection.

STANZA 28

evaṃ carantu na ca kāṅkṣati bodhisattvo

jñātavya yo vihara te sa-upāya-prajño

prakṛtī-asanta parijānayamāna dharmāṃ

eṣā sa prajña-vara-pāramitāya caryā

Pursuing practice without any doubts, the bodhisattva

is known to abide endowed with wisdom,

knowing all phenomena utterly without a ground.

This is the practice of wisdom, the highest perfection.

STANZA 29

rupasmi yo na sthihate na ca vedanāyāṃ

saṃjñāya yo na sthihate na ca cetanāyām

vijñāni yo na sthihate sthitu dharmatāyāṃ

eṣā sa prajña-vara-pāramitāya caryā

In form or in feeling he does not abide,

nor in definitions, nor in what's willed,

nor in any concept. In all things' true nature alone he abides.

This is the practice of wisdom, the highest perfection.

STANZA 30

nityam anitya sukha duḥkha śubhā śubhaṃ ti

ātmany an-ātmi tathatā tatha śūnyatāyām

phala-prāptitāya a-thito arahanta-bhūmau

pratyeka-bhūmi a-thito tatha buddha-bhūmau

Permanence, change, pleasure, torment, the comely and the foul,

self and not-self — such and such in this emptiness they are.

And so he does not rest on the grade he attained — the arhat,

the pratyeka, or the buddha realised.

STANZA 31

yatha Nāyako 'sthitaku dhātu a-saṃskṛtāyā

tatha saṃskṛtāya a-thito a-niketa-cārī

evaṃ ca sthānu-athito sthita bodhisattvo

a-sthānu sthānu ayu sthānu Jinena ukto

The Leader himself was not stationed in uncompounded element,

nor in compounded element, but freely he wandered without a home.

So too, without foundational grounding stands a bodhisatta.

A post not at its post — so the Victor calls this posture.

STANZA 32

yo icchatī Sugata-śrāvaka haṃ bhaveyaṃ

pratyeka-buddha bhaviyāṃ tatha dharma-rājo

imu kṣānty an āgami na śakyati prāpuṇetuṃ

yatha āra-pāra-gamanāya a-tīta-darśī

Those who wish to become the Sugata’s disciples,

or pratyeka-buddhas, or likewise, dharma-rajas —

without relying on this steadfastness they cannot fulfill their karma.

They move across, but see not yet the further shore.

STANZA 33

yo dharma bhāṣyati ya bhāṣyati bhāṣyamāṇāṃ

phala-prāpta pratyaya jino tatha loka-nātho

Nirvāṇato adhigato vidu-paṇḍitehi

sarve ta ātma ja nidṛṣṭa Tathāgatena

Those who teach dharma, and students of the teaching,

those who have obtained the results of a pratyeka-buddha, or a world-saviour;

and the Nirvana won by the learned and lucid —

mere phantasms, dreams — so has the Tathagata taught us.

STANZA 34

catvāri pudgala ime na trasanti ye 'smin

Jina-putra satya-kuśalo a-vivartiyaś ca

arhaṃ vidhūta-mala-kleśa prahīṇa-kāṅkṣo

kalyāṇa-mitra-paripācita yaś caturthaḥ

Four kinds of persons are not scared by this teaching:

the Victor's children skilled in the truths; saints unable to go back;

worthy ones free from defilements and dirt, and their doubts done away with;

those looked after by good teachers are the fourth kind reckoned.

STANZA 35

evaṃ carantu vidu-paṇḍitu bodhisattvo

nārhaṃmi śikṣati na pratyaya-buddha-bhūmau

sarva jñatāya anuśikṣati buddha-dharme

śikṣā-aśikṣa-naya śikṣati eṣa śikṣā

Thus making practice, the wise and learned bodhisattva

trains not in arhat-level, nor on pratyeka-buddha-level.

He trains alone in the buddha-dharma for the sake of omniscience.

A non-study is that study, for there is no student who studies.

STANZA 36

na ca rupa-vṛddhi-parihāṇi-parigrahāye

na ca śikṣati vividha-dharma-parigrahāye

sarva jñatāṃ ca parigṛhṇati śikṣamāṇo

niryāyatī ya iya śikṣa guṇe ratānām

The acquisition of more or less forms is not the aim of this training,

nor does he set out to acquire knowledge through the study of various teachings.

Omniscience alone he can hope to acquire by this training.

Into that he emerges when he trains in this training, and revels in its virtues.

STANZA 37

rupe na prajña iti rupi na asti prajñā

vijñāna saṃjña api vedana cetanā ca

na ca eti prajña iti teṣa na asti prajñā

ākāśa-dhātu-sama tasya na cāsti bhedaḥ

Forms are not wisdom, nor is wisdom found in form,

in consciousness, perceptions, feeling, or intention.

These are not wisdom, and no wisdom is in them.

Like space it is, without break or division.

STANZA 38

ārambaṇāna prakṛtī sa an-anta-pārā

sattvāna yā ca prakṛtī sa an-anta-pārā

ākāśa-dhātu-prakṛtī sa an-anta-pārā

prajñāpi loka-vidunāṃ sa an-anta-pārā

Of all objective supports the ground is boundless;

of beings likewise the ground is boundless.

As the ground of the space element is boundless,

so the wisdom of those seeing through the world is boundless.

STANZA 39

saṃjñeti nāma parikīrtitu nāyakena

saṃjñāṃ vibhāviya prahāṇa vrajanti pāram

ye atra saṃjña-vigamaṃ anuprāpnuvanti

te pāra-prāpta sthita pāramite hu bhonti

Concepts are just words so the masters have taught us.

Concepts abandoned, the way is clear to the supreme.

Those who succeed in transcending concepts,

having reached the far shore, fulfill the teaching.

Stanza 40

saci Gaṅga-vāluka-samāni sthihitva kalpāṃ

sattveti śabda parikīrtayi Nāyako 'yam

sattvasyupādu kutu bheṣyati ādi-śuddho

eṣā sa prajña-vara-pāramitāya caryā

If for aeons countless as the sands of the Ganges,

the Master himself would continue to utter the word ‘beings’,

no ‘being’ would arise therefrom — all is primordially pure!

This is the practice of wisdom, the highest perfection.”

CONCLUSION

evaṃ Jino bhaṇati a-pratikūla-bhāṇī

yada haṃ imāya vara-pāramitāya āsī

tada vyākṛto 'hu parā Puruṣottamena

Buddho bhaviṣyasi an-āgata-adhvanasmin

Thus the Victor concludes his preaching, by saying:

“When all I said and did conformed to perfect wisdom,

Then this prediction I received from the one who went before:

‘Fully enlightened, at a future time you will The Buddha become!’”

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